

PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9
PEACE AND JOY!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Philippians chapter 4 as we continue our in-depth study of Paul's letter to the church in Philippi.

Since this letter is known as the *Epistle of Joy*, that has been our focus in our studies of Philippians.

And I realize that people want to focus on other things, especially prophecy and they really don't see the importance of looking at this topic of – **JOY!**

Let me say this. You can study prophecy twenty-four hours a day and it will be meaningless if you have no joy in your life.

And I have seen this in Christians. They are angry at the government, they are angry at this person, they are angry at the news. They are just plain angry!

Now I am not saying prophecy is not important, but keep in mind that the Bible deals with about 25% to maybe 30% prophecy and the other 75% or 70% deals with how we are to live out our faith!

What is my point?

My point is this. Your life is a witness to the world and if you are not filled with the joy of the Lord, who wants what you have!

Let's face it, the world is very angry.

Remember the assassination attempt on Donald Trump. And out of that we saw thousands of people crying and complaining that the shooter missed and didn't kill him. In other words, they are angry, and that truly is a world apart from Christ! But it should not be seen in our lives.

I am not saying we are not angry with the sin that is destroying this world, it breaks my heart. But there needs to be that focus on the Lord and the joy that He gives to us and that is the focus, once again, of our study this morning – ***PEACE AND JOY!***

Keep in mind that when Paul wrote this letter he was in prison in Rome for his faith. And like I have said, this letter has been known as the ***Epistle of Joy!***

How can he be in prison and be filled with joy?

Because he was focused on the Lord, that was the joy of his life, and no one could ever take that away from him.

Not only that, but he saw the Lord working even in these difficult times.

The guards that were chained to Paul were getting saved.

Christians who were discouraged to hear Paul was in prison, when they saw what God was doing, they were encouraged in the faith.

No anger, no bitterness, no frustration and no worry for Paul.

How can that be when many Americans and even Christians are not free from these things, especially worry!

Because we have lost our focus!

Interestingly enough our English word “***worry***” comes from an Anglo-Saxon word that means, “***to strangle.***”

How fitting that is as worry tends to strangle people physically, emotionally, and yes, even spiritually.

I don’t know if you realize this or not, I think you do, but the church of Jesus Christ, believers are under attack!

And many Christians are shocked by this and some, because of this intense pressure to conform to society, they compromise what they believe, and they are becoming more and more like the world!

In a recent article, we are told,

The role Christianity plays in American life has been declining for some time now. In fact, according to Aaron Renn, it has all but eroded. We live in what he describes . . . as a ***“negative world.”***

American society no longer regards Christianity in a positive light. Nor is it ambivalent [uncertain], as it was (in Renn’s argument) from about 1994 till 2014.

American society now has an increasingly negative view of Christianity. ***“Being known as a Christian is a social negative, particularly in the elite domains of society. Christian morality is expressly repudiated and seen as a threat to the public good and the new public moral order.”***

The consequences of subscribing to a Christian vision of life and thereby violating the secular moral order can and will increasingly bring negative consequences.

Perhaps this was predictable and maybe even inevitable. After all, any number of worldviews have been working to displace and destroy Christian particularism ever since deism reared its mischievous head in the 18th century.

Add to it the proliferation of materialism, postmodern deconstructionism, cultural Marxism, all the other isms that followed – not to mention the corruption of Christianity from within – and it’s no wonder that Christianity is facing tough times.

- <https://bit.ly/3YeOZjk>

Jesus warned us that this would happen and thus, we should not be surprised.

In John 16:33 Jesus said, “**These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.**”

What do we have in this world?

TRIBULATION!

What is our response to that tribulation that we are facing?

We are to – ***BE OF GOOD CHEER!***

Why should we respond that way?

Because Jesus has – ***OVERCOME THE WORLD!***

You see, perspective is everything and if we have the correct perspective of things, then we will be filled with joy!

Also, the warning in Acts 14:21-22, “**And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’**”

Paul understood the attack that had come upon the church, and he was encouraging believers to stand strong and continue in the faith. What a great encouragement that must have been!

And remember what we studied in II Timothy 3:12, “**Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**”

As we live out our faith what we are doing is in opposition to what the world does and thus, as the light of God shines upon their sin it makes them mad, it makes them angry, and they come against the church of God!

As you read through the book of Acts and the Epistles, you see that the church has faced much persecution since it began. Thus, why are we surprised when we face it?

Now, as we will see in our study on – ***PEACE AND JOY***, God wants us to stand strong in the faith and as we do, as we our focused upon Him, then that peace of God in the midst of the storms of life, in the midst of the persecution, will fill our lives and we can enjoy that peace of God!

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into the following main points. They are,

PEACE WITH THE BRETHREN – PHILIPPIANS 4:1-3

PEACE WITH THE LORD – PHILIPPIANS 4:4-5

PEACE IN LIFE – PHILIPPIANS 4:6-9

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Philippians chapter 4, beginning in verse 1, and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and look at this topic –

PEACE AND JOY!

PHILIPPIANS 4**VERSES 1-3**

Remember that when we see the word “**Therefore**” it links us back to what the person was just talking about.

And Paul is linking this verse to what he just spoke of in Philippians 3:20-21. Paul wrote this, “**For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.**”

Keep in mind that Paul is going to deal with an issue, a dispute that was happening between two women in the church there in Philippi.

Thus, his point here is that since you are going to be raised in glory why don't you start living it now, why don't you stand fast in the Lord!

You see, there are going to be all kinds of things that will come upon your life to sway you, to knock you from the firm foundation.

Thus, be aware, be strong *IN* the Lord no matter what comes your way.

As the Philippians heard this, they had plenty of reasons to stand fast in the Lord and so should we!

This truly is the key to all that we do – ***IN THE LORD!***

Paul said in Ephesians 6:10-13, **“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and *having done all, to stand.*”**

We are in a battle for our faith and yes, the enemy can't take our faith away, but he can cause us to stumble, he can destroy our witness of Christ.

Thus, be aware, pay attention and ***STAND FAST IN THE LORD!***

And notice the way that Paul put it there in Ephesians – ***HAVING DONE ALL, TO STAND!***

There will be all kinds of things that are placed in front of us to cause us to stumble and thus, we must pay attention and we must be wise to the scheming's of the Devil and not fall prey to his devices or his tricks!

Paul also speaks of this crown, what is he speaking about?

He is not speaking of the crown of a King or a ***DIADEMA***; but a ***STEPHANOS*** or a laurel wreath given to victorious athletes.

In other words, they were his proof of effective service, his wreath or trophy.

Paul also spoke of the Thessalonians in this manner as he tells us in I Thessalonians 2:19-20, **“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.”**

Paul had the love of God for the brethren and their faith, their walk with the Lord brought him great joy! And as your walk with the Lord it brings me great joy!

John picked up on that in III John 4 as he wrote, **“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”**

And now we come to a problem in the church there in Philippi.

This was not a doctrinal issue; it was a relational issue.

And let’s face it, a church without any problems is a church that has no people.

Again, problems will be around, it is how we deal with them that is important!

Now, before we deal with this problem, let me say this. When Paul said, **“stand fast”** the Greek is saying, *“continually stand firm in the Lord.”*

In other words, *“Don’t lose the ground you’ve already taken. Don’t let the enemy push you backward.”*

Why did Paul say that?

Because the church in Philippi was losing ground to the enemy through bickering, discord, fighting, divisions, pride!

Listen again to what Paul wrote. **“I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.”** Philippians 4:2-3.

I know that some have a hard time with this, how in the world can Christians fight with each other?

Because of that flesh nature we have!

And thus, we see here that Paul mentions a dispute between two women from the church at Philippi.

They are Euodia (yoo-od-ee’-ah) and Syntyche [SUNTUCHE, (soon-too’-khay)].

And make no mistake about it, they were servants of Christ!

How do I know that?

Because these two women, who were obviously believers, fellowshipped together in the church at Philippi and they worked with Paul for a time in spreading the good news of Jesus.

They were assisting in that work but now they were at odds with each other and their behavior, their fighting was affecting the church in Philippi, the people!

I am sure that there were the groups that sided with each of them and thus, division was going to be the outcome if it was not dealt with.

What was the problem?

Paul doesn't tell us.

Who was right?

Paul doesn't care!

Then what is the point?

They forgot the Lord, they forgot that they are sisters in Christ and because they were so self-centered instead of Christ-centered that it affected their behavior, and like I have said, it affected the church as well there in Philippi!

And notice what Paul tells them to do.

He tells them to ***“Knock it off! Grow up!”***

I'm paraphrasing of course, but Paul tells them to put on the mind of Christ, let whatever happened melt away in the love of Jesus!

There is that little poem that kind of sums this up for us, getting along with the brethren that is. It goes like this,

*To live above with the saints we love,
Oh, that will be glory.
But to live below with the saints we know,
Well, that's another story.*

- Source Unknown

Now we laugh at that, but it is a reality and these fights, these disagreements have to be let go.

Here's the thing. It is not a matter of being right or being wrong, it is a matter of forgiveness.

Now please understand I am not speaking of false doctrine or false teachers; they do need to be dealt with and exposed.

This is relationship issues, likes and dislikes, someone rubbing you the wrong way.

If Jesus has forgiven you of all your sins, why can't you forgive others?

The reason is really simple - ***YOU DON'T WANT TO FORGIVE!***

I realize that this is not easy because the flesh wants to fight back. We don't want to forgive! You see, it is a choice on our part.

But ***AGAPE*** love is a love that is filled with forgiveness, and it goes against the flesh. That is why there is a battle.

Who are you going to surrender to?

The Lord or the flesh?

And yes, there are times when the other person won't heal the relationship, but you do your part and let God work on that person to heal.

Remember what Paul said in Philippians 2:1-5, **“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”**

Thus, get back to where you once belonged, back to Christ, for there is too much work to be done than to fight amongst each other!

Put on the mind of Christ and don't work in the flesh but walk in the Spirit with the fruit of the Spirit – **LOVE** – flowing from your life!

And if Paul mentions this it had to be a big deal. And I don't think disputes are ever a small matter, they affect too many people, and they are self-centered.

Thus, Paul not only urges these women to heal their relationship, but he urges some people in the church to assist them in the healing, to motivate them to get right.

First of all, Paul speaks of a **“true companion”** or **“yokefellow.”**

Who is Paul speaking of?

There are many ideas on who Paul is speaking of.

Some say the elders of the church in Philippi.

Others say it is the church members in general.

It could also be Epaphroditus.

But, by the context, **SUZUGOS**, (sood'-zoo-gos) in the Greek, is probably his name. The best explanation is to leave **SUZUGOS**, (sood'-zoo-gos) untranslated and take it as a proper name.

So Paul is admonishing this person to help these women out in their dispute.

And, again, it must have been a big enough problem for Paul to get involved here. And he wants this person to also get involved and help these precious women, who faithfully and fervently served the Lord over the years with Paul and Clement and others, to work things out, settle this dispute.

Folks, God takes this issue very seriously and so should we!

When there is no unity amongst the brethren, there is instability in the church!

Thus, Paul tells us that we need to deal with it before we let the enemy get the better of the situation!

And here lies the problem. We are told in this poem,

*Believe as I believe, no more no less
That I am right and no one else, confess;
Feel as I feel, think as I think,
Eat as I eat and drink as I drink;
Look as I look, do as I do
Then I'll have fellowship with you.*

- Leslie Flynn, Great Church Fights

Again, we laugh at that, but it is true.

Now I am not saying we just agree with anything anyone is saying and neither is Paul.

The idea here is that we are solid on the foundational truths of our faith. There may be differences here and there, but the foundational truths are established.

You can't have unity apart from Christ and the Christ of the Bible, not the one that people make up in their own minds.

Put on the mind of Christ and you will be able to get along – ***STAND FAST!***

Now, what does Paul mean when he speaks of the book of life?

All the names of every person are written in the book of life.

I know, that is shocking but here me out.

In saying that, does that mean that everyone is saved?

Not at all, for Jesus said in Revelation 3:5, **“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.”**

If all our names are in the book of life, then the question is ***“How do we get our names blotted out from the book of life?”***

Good question.

By rejecting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior! That is the only sin that will keep you out of heaven, (John 16:9).

That means that every person has the choice to be saved. They have to make the decision to repent of their sins and ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of their lives. If they don't, then their name will be blotted out of the Book of Life!

And what happens to those that reject Jesus, whose names have been blotted out of the Book of Life?

John tells us, “**And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.**” Revelation 20:15.

It is our choice to accept Jesus or reject Him.

Let me also say this because this applies to our lives as well. And the point that we have to keep in mind is that the Philippians were very aware of their Roman citizenship. This was so important to them.

Even though they were far away from Rome, they enjoyed the benefits of Rome!

Listen to how this plays out and how this applies to what Paul is speaking of here.

When a baby was born in Philippi, it was important that its name be registered on the official, legal registry of the city proving the citizenship of that person, guaranteeing them all the rights and privileges of citizenship.

How does that relate to us as Christians?

When a person puts their faith in Jesus at that instant their name is sealed in the Book of Life, the official registry of heaven proving that they are a citizen of heaven who have been given the right to live there by virtue of their spiritual birth. (John 3)

Now here's the thing that Paul is saying to the Philippian church.

Your name is written in the Book of Life, you are going to spend eternity with the Lord and with each other. Thus, get along now, don't wait for heaven!

Something for us to think about in regard to our relationship with other brothers and sisters in the Lord!

Thus, what we see here, what Paul is calling for the church in Philippi and the Holy Spirit is speaking to us – **PEACE WITH THE BRETHREN!**

And I will tell you this. When we stand fast in the Lord and have peace with the brethren, there is great joy!

The next point that Paul will speak on is – ***PEACE WITH THE LORD!***

And this is interesting because this peace with the Lord is filled with tremendous – ***JOY!***

VERSES 4-5

Now you might think that this is kind of a strange statement as Paul just finished up telling these women to stop fighting with each other and get along.

But it fits perfectly with what Paul has just said!

First of all, do you think these two women were happy with the situation they were in?

Of course not, even though they may have put on a façade. But the reality is this did not fool anyone.

Think about it. Paul was aware of what was going on there, the fighting between these two women. So whatever smile they might have put on when they saw each other, it was not real, and it did not fool anyone.

Everyone knew what was going on. The church knew. Paul knew of their animosity towards each other and thus Paul not only tells them to put on the mind of Christ but also to rejoice in the Lord!

Paul uses the Greek word ***CHAIRO***, (khah'-ee-ro) for “**rejoice**” and it is in the present tense, which means to be constantly rejoicing.

Now you may be thinking, *“How, they ask, can people be commanded to produce an emotion? But joy is not a feeling; it is the deep-down confidence that God is in control of everything for the believer’s good and His own glory, and thus all is well no matter what the circumstances. . . . (rejoice) is a present imperative, calling believers to the continual, habitual practice of rejoicing. Neither Paul’s imprisonment nor the Philippians’ trials should eclipse their joy.”* (John MacArthur, Philippians 4)

Thus, instead of contention and bickering we all should rather be rejoicing in the Lord!

Let me also say this. Please don’t think Paul is saying you need to have a positive mental attitude, but he is saying your focus must be on the Lord for only in Him can we rejoice because He never changes.

You see, you can’t rejoice in the Lord when you are fighting with the brethren.

I love the book by Philip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*.

He was a shepherd and thus, he understands sheep and because of that, he has great insight into this Psalm, and he makes Psalm 23 come alive. David was a shepherd and thus, Philip Keller, being a shepherd, understands sheep!

One of the things that he says about sheep is that they are naturally contentious!

And do you know when this tends to play out!

When the shepherd is not in view! It is then that they become irritable, and they will fight with each other, pushing and butting one another with their heads.

Do you know what happens when the shepherd comes in view?

All of that fighting stops and the sheep become quiet, they become peaceful!

I think you know where I am going with this, at least I hope you do!

When there is fighting, head butting, contentions, the reason is simple. You have lost sight of the true Shepherd Jesus Christ!

But, once you put Him back in your life, once you see Him, all that fighting, all that head butting, all those contentions will stop and there will be peace!

If you are fighting with someone, sorry, but Jesus is not in the picture. Place Him back in your life and receive that peace in your life that is only found in Him and then, like Paul, you will – ***REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS!***

It is out of this that Paul then speaks of “**gentleness**” and the word that Paul uses for “**gentleness**” is the Greek word ***EPIEIKES***, (ep-ee-i-kace) and it carries with it the idea of patience, forbearance.

It speaks of a spirit that is yielded to the Lord and thus, His nature flows from their lives.

Now think about that for a minute because it flows from what Paul was saying about these two women who were fighting.

This gentleness was something these women in Philippi were not manifesting and thus, they were at odds with each other.

You see, instead of people seeing your wrong behavior, let them see the gentleness of God flow from your life – why?

Because the Lord is at hand, or He is present with us!

Again, keep in mind in Philippians 4:1-5 Paul is showing us we don’t have to worry about people, who’s right and who is wrong because the Lord is present with us.

Also, I think Paul is saying that the Lord’s return is coming soon so be ready. Knowing He is coming back will help us to live better as we anticipate His coming.

John, in speaking of the Lord's return for His bride, the church, tells us in I John 3:3,

“And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

So, because of His presence, because He is returning soon, live a life that is pleasing to the Lord, walk accordingly!

It is like Paul said in Philippians 3:20 to 4:1, **“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.”**

When we are at – *PEACE WITH THE LORD*, then *JOY* will flow from our lives!

As we read on, we will deal with – *PEACE IN LIFE!*

Now this is a big one because we live in a world that is at war with our beliefs and thus, how in the world can we find this – *PEACE IN LIFE?*

Let's read on and see.

VERSES 6-9

These verses should be very precious to us. And I think most if not all of us know them, we may even have them memorized.

That is great but, knowing and applying are two different things.

You see, this is a truth from God, but now you must take that truth and live it, believe it, walk in it!

Let me share this with you and then we will deal with what Paul is saying here.

One writer put it like this as he wrote,

Rejoicing in the Lord is not a luxury – it is a necessity!

Until the Lord comes back, all of us are going to experience excruciating stresses, interpersonal woes, humiliating sicknesses, our own deaths, and if we live long enough, the wrenching deaths of loved ones and friends.

But in every and all circumstances, we are to ***“Rejoice in the Lord always.”***

How so?

At the very foundation we must press close the fiery record of the joy of our salvation.

We must take David’s words to heart as they were fulfilled by the ultimate Son of David:

***He drew me up from the pit of destruction,
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.
He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God. (Psalm 40:2, 3)***

- R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians – The Fellowship of the Gospel*, pp. 166-167

Notice how Paul starts out here as he says, **“Be anxious for nothing . . .”**

“Are you kidding me! How in the world can Paul say something like that? This is not right. There are things that I am anxious about. There are things that I am worried about. I don’t understand how Paul can say that!”

It is even worse than that. You see, what Paul is saying is not just a suggestion or an option but a command by Paul not to worry about anything.

That does not seem so easy, does it?

Maybe you are thinking that Paul is not being fair. He does not know what you are going through.

In light of that, how in the world can we accomplish something like that?

I think for many of us, if not all of us, we struggle with this from time to time.

In fact, what Paul is saying may even seem cold when you consider the situation you are in now.

Let's try and put this into perspective.

First of all, is worrying going to help you or hurt you?

It will hurt you and it will eat away at you; it will strangle the life out of you!

Remember what we said about the word "*worry*."

That our English word "*worry*" comes from an Anglo-Saxon word that means, "*to strangle*."

How fitting that is as worry tends to strangle people physically, emotionally, and yes, even spiritually.

If you want to strangle the life out of peace and joy in your life, then worry is what will do it!

Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 6:25-34, **“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”**

Worrying about things will solve nothing in our lives, and, like I have said, it will hurt us in the long run!

We need to have a correct perspective and keep our eyes on the Lord and live for today and not worry about tomorrow.

Think about what happens when worry gets a strangle hold on our life. Our focus is on the situation and our eyes are off the Lord. That is a problem!

Then what should we do when we find ourselves in difficult situations?

Give it to God in prayer, which is a general request; and in supplications, which is more of a specific request.

God wants to hear from us and when we do come before Him may we do so with an attitude of gratitude or thankfulness.

Don't come before God complaining but thanking Him for who He is, for His love for us and-so-on.

Now here's the thing. As we bring our concerns before the Lord, He fills us with His peace.

Our part is bringing our concerns to the Lord and it is out of that we see God respond with His peace that surpasses all understanding!

What if you don't feel His peace right now?

Maybe it is because your mind is not focused upon Him but upon the situation or situations you are in right now.

In Isaiah 26:3 we are told, "**You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.**"

This is not a peace from the storms of life but a peace through the storms of life. It is a peace that is from God, not based upon our efforts, it is beyond our understanding that we can be at peace in the midst of a storm and yet God has given that to us if we would only receive it by faith.

I have experienced this many times in my life that when I didn't know how I was going to accomplish something, I gave it to the Lord and His peace filled my life and I was able to accomplish it.

The biggest one for me was when my family asked me to share at the funeral of my dad. I was shocked that they asked me, but the priest was tied up, so I guess I was the only other person.

I did untie the priest after the service! No, just kidding!

I am a pretty emotional person, and I loved my dad, and I did not know how I would get through this without breaking up and not being able to even talk.

I don't know how, but the peace of God filled my heart, and I was able to do the service without losing it. I had this peace from God that I guess you can say surpassed all my understanding and I was able to share Jesus with my family and friends who were there, and the room was packed!

When we think of peace we tend to think of the absence of storms, but that is not the peace that God is speaking of.

Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

Long ago a man sought the perfect picture of peace.

Not finding one that satisfied, he announced a contest to produce this masterpiece. The challenge stirred the imagination of artists everywhere, and paintings arrived from far and wide.

Finally, the great day of revelation arrived. The judges uncovered one peaceful scene after another, while the viewers clapped and cheered.

The tensions grew. Only two pictures remained veiled. As a judge pulled the cover from one, a hush fell over the crowd.

A mirror-smooth lake reflected lacy, green birches under the soft blush of the evening sky. Along the grassy shore, a flock of sheep grazed undisturbed.

Surely this was the winner.

The man with the vision uncovered the second painting himself, and the crowd gasped in surprise.

Could this be peace?

A tumultuous waterfall cascaded down a rocky precipice; the crowd could almost feel its cold, penetrating spray. Stormy-gray clouds threatened to explode with lightning, wind and rain.

In the midst of the thundering noises and bitter chill, a spindly tree clung to the rocks at the edge of the falls. One of its branches reached out in front of the torrential waters as if foolishly seeking to experience its full power.

A little bird had built a nest in the elbow of that branch. Content and undisturbed in her stormy surroundings, she rested on her eggs. With her eyes closed and her wings ready to cover her little ones, she manifested peace that transcends all earthly turmoil.

- Berit Kjos, *A Wardrobe from the King*, pp. 45-46

That is the peace that Paul is talking about.

That is the peace that Jesus is talking about.

That is the peace that the Scriptures are talking about.

Remember what we have read as Jesus said in John 16:33, **“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”**

Jesus is saying that in this life we will endure storms, tribulation because the world is against us as it is against God. But don't focus on what the world is doing to you, focus on the Lord and understand, He has overcome the world and one day He will rule and reign over it!

In Him we have peace!

And in John 14:27 Jesus said, **“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”**

This peace that Jesus gives to us causes us not to be afraid, not to be troubled, but we are able to rest in Him!

And that is what Paul says here in Philippians 4:7, that as we give these things to the Lord, as we lay them at His feet, with thanksgiving we let Him know what is on our heart, we will receive that **“. . . peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, [and it] will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”**

And notice what this peace of God does in our lives.

First of all, Paul says that this peace that is from God will guard our hearts or our emotions.

We are not anxious, fearful and-so-on because His peace is guarding our hearts.

Think about our emotions, we can get them racing and they can be all over the place depending upon the situations we are facing.

But Paul wants us to focus on the Lord and not the situation, because we will have tribulation in this world. Thus, let the Lord guard your emotions and you can rest, your heart will not be racing.

Not only that. Paul also tells us that His peace guards our mind or our thoughts.

In other words, the enemy can't mess us up because our thoughts are upon the Lord and based upon the truth of His Word!

But, if we start to focus on everything that we are going through, it is going to be tough! Our minds can race all over the place, *“What if this happens? Maybe I should do this!”* and we drive ourselves crazy thinking about all that can happen instead of resting in the Lord and receiving His peace!

One survey I read showed that only 8% of what people are worried about are legitimate, which means that 92% of the things that we worry about are not legitimate!

Again, we still think, *“What about this?” “What about that?” “What am I going to do?”*

No, don’t focus on that, but focus on the Lord and let that peace that God has for you, that peace that goes far beyond your human understanding, give you rest.

You see, as you look at the situation you should not be at peace. But as you look at Jesus you will find that peace through the storms of life.

It is as Peter is admonishing us as he wrote in I Peter 5:7, **“casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”**

Now, I think many times we are so focused on this world that we lose perspective of things. Paul is going to show us what we need to focus upon as we read on.

Remember what he said in Philippians 4:8-9, **“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”**

Notice that he did not say, *“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, like CNN, meditate on these things. And the God of peace will be with you.”*

What are you filling your life with?

Are you filling your life with thoughts that will invite the peace of God in your life or are you filling your life with thoughts that will cause you to worry, fret, be anxious and-so-on?

Remember the old adage, *“Garbage in, garbage out”*?

And it is funny to think it is an old adage, but it is, and it is very applicable here and it is very true.

Again, what are you filling your mind with because that is what will come flowing out from your life.

Paul tells us that instead of filling your mind with the garbage of this world, **“meditate”** or take an inventory of these things in your life – things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, things that are of good report, things that are proper, and things that are praiseworthy!

Paul put it this way in Romans 12:2, and this is from The New Living Translation, **“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.”**

And The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].”**

It is not just information but application to our lives!

You see, what we meditate on, what we focus our minds upon really does matter!

If you want that peace, then fill your life with the things of God, things that will build you up and not bring you down!

It makes sense and yet, so often we get sucked into these things.

And to drive home the point, Paul says, “**The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.**” Philippians 4:9.

Paul walked the walk so he could say, “*Follow me as I follow Christ!*”

And not only will you have the peace of God in your life as you follow after Christ, surrender your life to Him, but the God of peace will also be with you!

Paul put it this way in Colossians 3:15-17, “**And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.**”

In other words, let your walk match up with your talk and as you let God rule in your life they will match up!

Remember how we started out – ***WE NEED TO STAND FAST IN THE LORD!***

When we do, when we are focused on the Lord then we will be at – ***PEACE WITH THE BRETHREN!***

And then we dealt with where this peace truly begins and the joy that comes from that peace as we looked at – ***PEACE WITH THE LORD!***

And as we have closed this section, we saw that we can truly have – ***PEACE IN LIFE!***

If we apply these things to our life then we will be able to do as Paul did and admonished the Philippians to do, **“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”** Philippians 4:4.